

Grow Spiritually

1 Peter 2:1–3

Peter encourages the readers to separate themselves of negative attitudes and he urges them to express their need for spiritual food, so that they may mature in faith and knowledge.

1. Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

The first word in the sentence is “Wherefore.” On the basis of what Peter said in the last section of the previous chapter (1:23–25), he now draws a conclusion. In 1:23, Peter declares that the word of God is the seed that God implants in us so that we may be *born again*. As we move into this 2nd chapter, Peter now asserts that reborn children of God ought to exhibit their new life in their ***daily conduct***.

When someone is born again, we expect to see the evidence in his personal behavior. In fact, we are looking for conduct that is ***distinctively Christian***.

a. “Laying aside.” Peter here uses a verb that expresses the imagery of removing garments, for he says, “laying aside all malice.” In ancient Christian baptism ceremonies, those being baptized customarily took off and discarded the clothes they wore to the ceremony. Following their baptisms, they put on new robes they received from the church.

b. “All malice.” Note that the word ***all*** is ***comprehensive*** and ***allows no exceptions***. In his list of sins Peter writes the term ***all*** three times.

Piper: Malice: a desire to hurt someone with words or deeds

Webster’s: desire to cause pain, injury, or distress to another

Spurgeon: “Revenge is sweet;” but not to the man who has tasted Christ, for he says, “How can I have vengeance upon my fellow, when Christ hath put away my sin?” Now, forgiveness is sweet, and he loatheth malice, and turneth aside from it as from venom itself.

The word *malice* signifies ill will that originates in our sinful nature.

c. “***All*** guile.” Once again Peter uses the adjective *all* to include everything that is deceitful.

Piper: Guile is a desire to (1) gain some advantage or (2) preserve some position by deceiving others.

He alludes to a number of actions that are covered by the phrase *all guile*: falsehood, craft, seduction, slander, and treachery. Deceit takes on the appearance of truth so that the unwary may be tricked.

Therefore, as Kistemaker puts it, deceit and hypocrisy are twins: by deceit a person is wronged and by hypocrisy he is deceived.

d. “Hypocrisies, envies.” These two words appear in the plural in Greek and in our King James Version; other commentators and translations frequently make this phrase singular—o the supremacy of the Authorized Version! That Monarch of Books for the English speaking world!

*Piper: Hypocrisy: a desire **not to be known** for what one really is.*

Next Peter concerns us with envy. Envy is an attitude expressed in a desire to possess what belongs to someone else.

Piper: Envy: a desire for some privilege or benefit that belongs to another with resentment that another has it and you don't.

Webster's New World Dictionary defines it as “painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another joined with a desire to possess the same advantage”

Webster's Old American Dictionary puts it this way as a verb: **EN'VY**, v. 1. To feel uneasiness, mortification or discontent, at the sight of superior excellence, reputation or happiness enjoyed by another; to repine at another's prosperity; to fret or grieve one's self at the real or supposed superiority of another, and to hate him on that account.

Envy not thou the oppressor, Prov. 3. Whoever envies another, confesses his superiority.

Mac: Envy defines the attitude of those who resent others' prosperity (cf. Matt. 27:18; Rom. 1:29; Phil. 1:15; Titus 3:3). It often leads to grudges, bitterness, hatred, and conflict (cf. 1 Cor. 3:3; 1 Tim. 6:4; James 3:16).

Envy is also defined as rivalry; competition.

e. “...and all evil speakings.” Here for the third time in this catalogue of sinful behaviors Peter uses the adjective *all*.

Mac: Evil speakings referred essentially to defamation of character [slander] (cf. 1 Peter 2:12; 3:16; James 4:11). He implies that the tongue is a ready and willing instrument to talk about our neighbor behind his back.

Spurgeon: Once more, put away all evil speaking. I am sorry to say that there are some, who I hope are Christians, who do not hate evil speaking. . A Christian should have nothing to do with scandal, but should say in a company, “Stop! I cannot sit by and hear you say that of an absent person; if he were here, you might say what you liked, but as he is not, please to hold your tongue, for I am here as a defender of those who are back-bitten.” If you, as a Church member, have aught against a brother, tell him alone; and then, if it should be some public and crying sin, tell it in an orderly manner to the Church-officers; but for you to go chattering about things you do not know to be true, is such an offense against Church-order, that if you are expelled from Church communion for it, the ejection will be justifiable. You certainly cannot expect to have fellowship with Christ if you mar the fellowship of Christ's Church by talking the one against the other.

Piper: evil speakings: the desire for revenge and self-enhancement, often driven by the deeper desire to deflect attention from our own failings. The worse light we can put another in by slander, the less our own darkness shows.

If such a transformation really occurred in someone's life, he should be laying aside **all** (**all** used here three times to emphasize totality) sins that are hindrances to the desire of God's Word (Heb. 12:1 "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside **every weight, and** the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us")

2. As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

a. "As newborn babes." Believers show their longing for the word of God. Peter commands his readers to crave the milk of God's word.

Mac: Love for and delight in God's Word always marks the truly saved.

The believer's delight in God's Word is the dominant theme of the longest chapter in the Bible, Psalm 119.

b. "**Desire**...the sincere milk."

Strong's concordance defines it this way: (to yearn); to intensely crave possession (lawfully or wrongfully): - (earnestly) desire (greatly), (greatly) long (after), lust, and I might add, covet

Spurgeon: Oh! what a good thing it is to have spiritual hunger and thirst! When people are not hungry, you may set a fine meal before them, but they will turn up their noses at it; but let a man come fresh from the field, hungry, down he sits; no matter how rough the fare; he only wants it to be sweet, wholesome, and nutritious, and he cuts huge slices for himself, and feeds to the full. Give me a congregation of hungry hearers, such as I usually see here on the [Sunday], with eyes that seldom turn from the preacher, and with ears that catch every word!

Mac: Peter wanted Christians to be faithful to that same kind of Spirit-prompted longing for the Word of God.

Peter describes the word *milk* with the adjective *sincere*. He does not say that the readers eventually will receive solid food when they mature, but that their nourishment is pure and spiritual. It denotes an absence of fraud and deceit (see John 1:47).

A great threat to salvation and to our growth toward salvation (v. 2) is what I would call spiritual fatalism—the belief or feeling that you are stuck with the way you are—"this is all I will ever experience of God.

This spiritual fatalism is a feeling that (1)genetic forces and (2)family forces and (3)the forces of my past experiences and(4)present circumstances are just too strong to allow me to ever change

and become more zealous for God (Tit. 2:14), or more fervent (Rom. 12:12), or more delighted in God (Psalm 37:4), or more hungry for fellowship with Christ (John 6:35), or more at home with spiritual things (Rom. 8:5), more bold (2 Tim. 1:7), or more constant or joyful (Rom. 12:12) or hopeful (1 Pet. 1:13).

c. "That ye may grow thereby" The main verb in this clause is "grow." The result of consuming the milk of God's word ought to be the spiritual growth of the believers. As a mother constantly looks for evidence of growth in her child, so God wants to see continued spiritual growth in his children. The verb *may grow* literally refers to physical growth in children. **Peter indicates that all believers continue to be babies whose constant diet is the milk of God's Word.**

God wants his children to grow spiritually in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). It is another command Peter gives, *But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*

d. "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

Spurgeon: "If:" then there is a possibility and a probability that some may not have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Do not rest, O believer, till thou hast a full assurance of thine interest in Christ. Let nothing satisfy thee till, by the infallible witness of the Holy Spirit bearing witness with thy spirit, thou art certified that thou art a child of God.

We get a taste of God's graciousness and so much of Who He is by his word.

The word *gracious* is to be understood as general kindness of God.

Spurgeon: Dear Christian friends, you remember the time, when laden with guilt and full of fears, you looked to Jesus Christ; it was the eye of faith which looked. After a while Christ's sweet love assured you that your sins were forgiven, and you felt a calm in your soul, such as you had never known before. That was tasting Christ. You knew his sweetness, you knew the power there was in him to take the bitterness out of your mouth and to put in sweetness instead thereof. Since that time you have been in trouble, but you have tasted Christ, for he has comforted you, and lifted up upon you the light of his countenance. You have been often greatly tried, but he has sustained you, and you have experienced that he is a very present help in time of trouble...thrice happy is the man who has thus tasted that the Lord is gracious.

So What???

- ☐ Are you **born again**?
- ☐ By the new nature you are fully **capable** laying aside malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, slander – are they put away in you?
- ☐ Do you experience **longing** for the spiritual milk of God's kindness in the word.
- ☐ Is satisfaction in God's kindness **rising** in your life?
- ☐ Peter's point is: The desire to **taste and enjoy** God's kindness cannot flourish where in the same heart are guile and hypocrisy.